

WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST
(Wildlife Disease Management Specialist)

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INTRODUCTION

The incumbent of this position serves as a Wildlife Disease Biologist within a state Wildlife Services (WS) Program for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The incumbent performs assignments involving program management, administration and minimal supervision. The work is primarily concerned with wildlife disease management activities relating to surveillance and control, and emergency preparedness and response. The major disease issues addressed by the WS Program concern agriculture, wildlife, and public health problems caused by various wild and feral animal species. Both operational and extension techniques are utilized.

MAJOR DUTIES

The incumbent serves as liaison in his/her states(s) of responsibility among WS, APHIS Veterinary Services, state departments of health, agriculture, and natural resources, other state and federal agencies concerned with wildlife disease issues, and public and animal health organizations. In some cases, state-level interagency task forces will already have been established, and the incumbent participates as the WS representative, providing coordination of disease management actions and communications related to disease control and surveillance activities. In those states where disease task forces have not been established, the incumbent provides leadership among agencies to develop such task forces.

The incumbent participates in disease control activities in his/her state(s) of responsibility, develops cooperative relationships, and assists the state and other agencies in accomplishing wildlife disease control objectives. The incumbent will be responsible for planning, coordinating, and implementing local wildlife disease monitoring and surveillance programs involving WS personnel, as requested by other state and federal entities, or the WS program. Additionally, the incumbent may periodically be required to assist in disease control activities outside of his/her area of responsibility. These temporary assignments may be located anywhere within the United States and may require details for up to several weeks or more away from his/her regular duty station. The incumbent will be required to take extensive training and recurrent training on wildlife disease recognition and control, disease monitoring and surveillance procedures, emergency response, coalition building, etc.

The incumbent works closely with the State Director and the WS National Wildlife Disease Coordinator to develop and implement a National Wildlife Disease Surveillance System. The incumbent is responsible for collecting, preserving, and shipping biological samples from a variety of animal species according to guidelines established by the WS

National Wildlife Disease Coordinator, diagnostic laboratories, and task force strategic plans. The incumbent is also responsible for gathering, compiling, and analyzing data collected from disease control and surveillance activities.

The incumbent responds to emergency disease outbreaks involving foreign animal, zoonotic, or other diseases where wildlife may be involved. This may require the incumbent to travel to emergency locations anywhere in the United States with as little as 24-hour notice, and may require an extended assignment away from his/her duty station for up to several weeks or more, depending on the specific disease emergency.

With assistance from the WS National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) staff, the incumbent develops and maintains documents required by the NEPA, prepares required scientific and administrative program reports, and may provide technical guidance to lower graded employees. Additionally, the incumbent recommends areas for potential disease research to the State Director, National Wildlife Services Disease Coordinator and the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), and may assist the NWRC research efforts by participating in field studies to increase knowledge of wildlife disease ecology and to develop methods to reduce the risk of disease transmission to livestock and humans.

The incumbent performs a variety of technical procedures on wildlife, including capture, restraint, marking and transport; collection of biological data and samples; chemical immobilization; and euthanasia and necropsy. Other duties may include procuring equipment and supplies necessary to conduct field activities related to the collection, storage, and safe transport of biological specimens; collecting data and biological samples, including animal tissues and blood, using techniques and technologies such as telemetry, GIS, GPS, necropsy, and population census and survey; and organizing data to facilitate statistical analyses.

FACTORS

KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION

Professional knowledge of the theories, principles, practices and techniques of wildlife biology and a working familiarity with related disciplines pertaining to wildlife damage management.

Knowledge of wildlife damage management techniques and methods.

Working knowledge of the NEPA and its requirements.

Knowledge of current literature and research related to wildlife diseases including collection and preservation of biological specimens, disease control strategies, and surveillance methods.

Knowledge of and practical experience related to a variety of technical procedures used in wildlife biology including animal capture, restraint and transport; marking and

collection of biological data and samples; chemical immobilization; and animal euthanasia and necropsy.

Ability to organize data to facilitate statistical analyses.

Procure equipment and supplies necessary to conduct field activities related to the collection, storage, and safe transport of biological specimens.

Ability to gather data, analyze data, and collect biological samples using techniques and technologies such as telemetry, GIS, GPS, necropsy, or population census and survey.

Knowledge of agency policies, procedures and statutory requirements related to the WS program.

Ability to communicate orally and in writing to coordinate and promote program activities with interested and/or affected groups and organizations, and to prepare educational materials, required program reports, and technical reports related to the control and surveillance of wildlife diseases.

SUPERVISORY CONTROLS

The incumbent receives day-to-day supervision from the State Director or Assistant State Director. The scope of the assignment, immediate objectives and priorities are specified by the State Director/Assistant State Director in consultation with the National Wildlife Disease Coordinator. The incumbent is expected to plan and carry out the assignment independently under minimal supervision in accordance with proven wildlife management/wildlife damage management techniques and practices, wildlife disease guidelines developed by the National Wildlife Disease Coordinator, and previous experience. On assignments that involve controversial matters, the incumbent typically will discuss the issues and possible approaches with the supervisor before carrying out the assignment. Completed work is reviewed periodically for adequacy, technical soundness and accomplishment of program objectives. Potentially controversial actions or recommendations are reviewed for impact on local agency programs and policies.

GUIDELINES

Guidelines include Federal and State laws, regulations and rules. Also included are agency and program policies, directives, procedures and professional literature of wildlife management/wildlife damage management and related sciences. Most assignments have aspects which require the incumbent to select, adapt or interpret existing methods, practices and instructions or to generalize from several guidelines to resolve the more complex problems. Some assignments require frequent departures from standardized procedures. The incumbent determines when problems require additional guidance.

COMPLEXITY

The work involves participation in national wildlife disease surveillance and emergency response systems. The incumbent must effectively collaborate with state and federal agencies by analyzing each situation encountered and select, apply, or recommend for application the most appropriate strategy to achieve program goals. The incumbent must be able to identify and recommend needed areas of program improvement. The demands from interested groups or individuals are often conflicting and occasionally result in inquiries from upper agency management concerning the incumbents area of work. Insight, judgment, and communication skills are required to achieve mutual understanding of reasonable and feasible disease surveillance and control strategies

SCOPE AND EFFECT

The purpose of the work is to develop partnerships with government and nongovernmental entities and the public to minimize the impacts of diseases on wildlife, agriculture, and human health and safety. The position is essential to increasing the effectiveness of interagency wildlife disease surveillance and emergency response systems at the state level and fully integrating them with a national program. The effective performance of this position will have important impacts on reducing economic losses from disease transmission between livestock, and wildlife, alleviating public health and safety hazards, and increasing the biosecurity of the United States.

PERSONAL CONTACTS

Personal contacts are with County, State and Federal agency personnel, private landowners, landowner groups, personnel from other WS offices and/or programs, public and animal disease organizations and the general public. Often, contacts will be with veterinarians, medical professionals, scientists, policy makers and other professionals with a high level of technical knowledge.

PURPOSE OF CONTACTS

Contacts are primarily to advise, negotiate, and coordinate wildlife disease surveillance and emergency response functions and to facilitate development or maintenance of cooperative programs. An additional intent is to develop cooperative relationships with affected stakeholder groups for the purpose of developing strategic plans and priorities for conducting wildlife disease management activities.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The work sometimes requires moderately strenuous physical exertion. Horseback riding, as well as the use of ATV's, may be required for some inspections and incumbent must be able to lift moderate weights. The incumbent may need to operate 4X4 vehicles over rough terrain and other off-road environments. The work may also require the incumbent to actively participate in aerial activities as a passenger and/or crew member of a fixed - or rotary-winged aircraft. Other physical exertion includes walking over wet, rough,

uneven or rocky surfaces, bending, crouching, stooping, stretching, or similar activities. The work does require average agility and dexterity.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Work is performed in both office and field locations. There is regular and recurring exposure to moderate risk and discomfort, such as adverse weather conditions, noisy environments and work with the aerial operations crew. Additionally, the incumbent will often work with biological specimens that may contain pathogens, and hazardous chemicals such as sedatives and anesthetics. The incumbent is expected to conduct all duties in a safe and orderly manner so as not to injure self or fellow workers. Operation of Government-owned or leased, as well as State-owned, vehicles may be required. The incumbent may be required to receive pre-exposure and post-exposure vaccinations to prevent contacting preventable diseases.